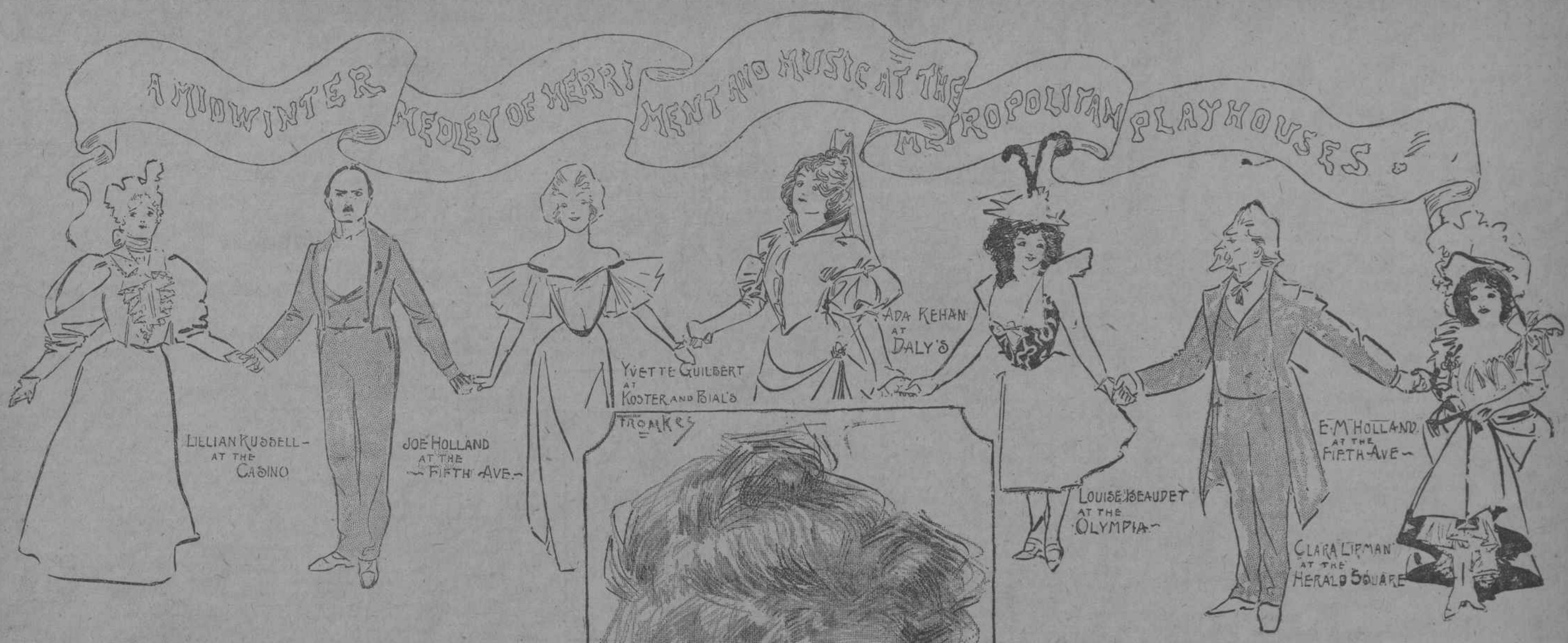

"HEARTSEASE" AT THE GARDEN.

By Alan Dale.

The third act of "Heartsease," the new play by Messrs. Klein and Clarke, that had its first metropolitan production at the Garden Theatre last night, was worth waiting for. It was, in fact, a capital act, that worked the audience up from the Slough of Despond into which the first and parts of the second act had plunged them. It gave Henry Miller an opoprtunity to do the best work he has yet done, and redeem himself from the stigma of staginess into which his season at the Empire threw him. It afforded opportunities for picturesque scenic accessories. In a word, the third act of "Heartsense" will presumably make the play successful. Don't let early trains or other breezy suburban excuses prompt you to miss this act.

The story of "Heartsense" rises very slowly. A mist of talkiness obscures it at the beginning. The hero and the heroine and the most villainous villain wear the costumes of 1785, and say "Zounds!" and "Odd's life!" and "Gad's life!" and "Damme, sir!" every other moment. The only early interjection that they miss is "Gadzooks," and that can easily be introduced. It is a very nice interjection, in its way.

After [illegible] very boisterous ol' gentlemen have talked for a considerable time you learn that Eric Temple, the hero, has written an opera. You are also informed that he is in love with the Hon. Miss Neville, daughter of Lord Neville, and stepdaughter of Lady Neville. He appears himself in a spinach-green coat and continuations, and confirms all this. The stepmother of Miss Neville has also taken a fancy to him, and his genius explains it all. The villain, Sir Geoffrey Pomfret, appears early in a suit of novelty silk of a very fetching description, and at the end of the first act the play has started.

In the second act Sir Geoffrey's villainy takes possession of the stage. He commits a theft. It is not Miss Neville's diamonds or anything so vulgar that he steals. He calmly takes possession of poor Eric's little opera in its neat brown cover, and makes off with it. Further complications are caused by Lady Neville's foolish fancy for the composer, which prompts her to pay his debts, and thus bring the demon of doubt into the trusting 1785 heart of Miss Neville. This brings you up to the third act, at the end of which all is well, and you have forgoten to criticise in the luxury of being entertained. The stage, during this act is set to reopresent the lobby of the Covent Garden Opera House. Eric's opera is being sung, with Sir Geoffrey's name programmed as its composer. Eric has been very ill—not with heart disease, as you might imagine from a distorted idea of the title of the play—but with brain fever. He enters the lobby to hear the strains of his work sung by artists. At first he believes that it is all due to hallucination. Then the truth dawns upon him, and as Sir Geoffrey stalks on he seizes him by the throat and gives him a well deserved choking.

This sounds bald in the telling, but it is very well done, and has an instantaneous effect upon the audience. The composer himself is an interesting figure without flaunting himself in the centre of the stage. And in this desperate predicament he wears a black suit—as though he had been led astray. It is quite possible to believe in such agony; to sympathize with such grievous wrongs, and to give to the hero a large dose of compassion. What the effect of this play will be upon the ever-ready cries of plagiarism which greet every success nowadays, it is impossible to foresee. Emboldened by the example of Eric Temple, rash youths may come before us to claim "Brian Boru" and "Shamus O'Brien." In fact, there is no knowing what dire advertisements "Heartsease" may inflict upon us. That, however, is imaginary, and belongs to the future. For the present it is quite enough to say that the semblance of novelty provided for our delectation by the operatic story of Eric Temple is pleasant enough.

The title of the piece is that of a song that the composer has dedicated to his lady love—a song that first brings the villain to his abyss of villainy. The play has little literary merit, nor has it a scintilla of humor. Under these circumstances it is easily seen that Messrs. Klein and Clarke have reached the emotions by sheer dramatic effect.

Henry Miller is once more reinstated in the affections of this public. Those affections he lost last season—and perhaps after all it was not his fault. In view of his work as Eric Temple, he can no longer be blamed for having started "on his own," and having taken unto himself the right of selecting the plays in which he will appear. His somewhat disagreeable personality was quite lost in that of Eric Temple. At the close of the second act, he gave us quite a masterly little touch of pathos, and in his hallucination scene he achieved his great success.

But why, oh why, did Mr. Miller fail to kill Nelson Wheatcroft in the encounter that was so deftly telegraphed from Connecticut last night? What a chance did Miller miss? Mr. Wheatcroft, as the villain, was singularly wooden and stagey, and all I can hope is that he will not allow his pupils to see his performance. If Mr. Miller had killed him, think of the companies that the unfortunate people out of town might have been spared. Alas! Alas!

Mrs. Louise Thorndyke Boucicault was extremely subtle as Lady Neville. She has a witty way with her that was singularly apropos in [illegible]'s part. Mrs. Boucicault is a clever actress, and it was agreeable to find her with us again. Miss Kimball was amateurish and declamatory as Miss Neville, and wouldn't fail to convince the most gullible audience that she had the least interest in what she was doing. She threw the rather silly part at the men and women before her, and seemed to be saying, "I'm not in it, and I can't help it."

Edmund D. Lyons made a "popular" hit with the audience. That is to say, the audience laughed when somebody trod on his toe, and somebody else upset a snuff box in his face. Frank Burbeck was atrocious as Lord Neville, a character that was heavy as dough. Small roles were pleasingly presented by Nanette Comstock and Max Figman.

"Heartsense" was very prettily staged. The audience seemed to be most amiably disappointed, for report had not been kind to the play. Report, however, had hailed from Chicago—a city that, while not quite as diametrically opposed to New York as is Boston, is nevertheless not very much of a criterion. The Garden will probably prosper with its latest offering. Last night's verdict will be confirmed.

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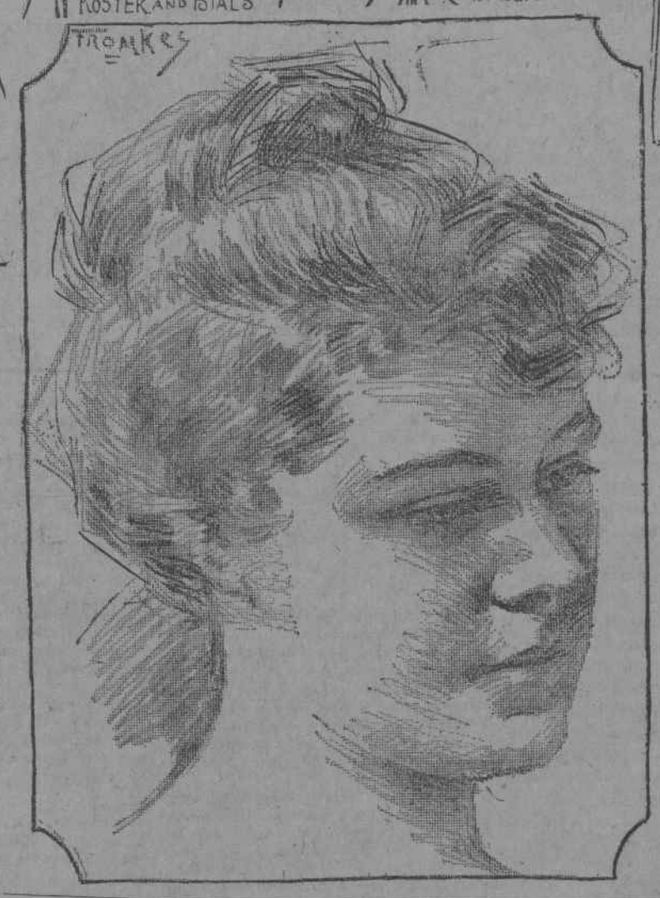
ALAN DALE.



SOMETHING NEW IN VAUDEVILLE.

There are two numbers at least in the programme at Proctor's Pleasure Palace which are bound to attract more than ordinary attention, and the audiences that gather about Fifty-eighth street and Third avenue are famous for their cold, critical taste. One of these is the equestrian performance of Miss Myrtle Peck and the other is the one-act play by Augustus Thomas, "The Man Upstairs," in which Mr. Howell Hansel is starred in the programme, though Miss Maggie Fielding carries off the honors in the opinion of the audience.

Miss Peck has long been famous throughout the West as a fancy and long-distance rider at county fairs, and her horse, Boston, is an animal of great natural sagacity that has received at her hands a liberal education in such advanced equine acts as the "Spanish Dance," "Side Trot," "Side Canter" and "Hop," to say nothing of other pleasing and interesting evolutions.

It is not often that an act of this description is seen in a continuous vaudeville entertainment, and Miss Peck is a rider of grace and experience and has received today the hearty encomiums of the Pleasure Palace audiences.

The charm of "The Man Upstairs" lies in the picture that it gives of a certain familiar scene in dom[illegible] the engagement of a new [illegible]. The piece was formerly legitimate stage as a curtain the original production Miss Fie[illegible] acted the role of the Irish cook. She has returned in this character to her first love, the vaudeville stage, which she graced at a time when it was known as "the variety business," and her reception yesterday indicated that her excursion into the legitimate had borne good fruit.

Miss Fielding's best scene—the one which strikes home to the heart of every householder—is that in which she arranges with her new mistress the conditions of her service. She wants to know how many there are in the family, if the husband comes home to lunch, how much company is entertained, and, finally, if the janitor is "a nagur." All this Miss Fielding does in a natural, easy and realistic manner. There is no sign of effort in her work, for she is not one of those stage humorists who are funny by the sweat of the brow, but she makes every point tell, and there are several legitimate actors that we wot of who could study her methods to advantage.

Mr. Edwin R. Lang, whose number on the programme directly precedes that in which Miss Fielding appears, could study her to great advantage. He styles himself "The Poetical Tramp," and he belongs to that innumerable multitude who think that the humor of Bill Hoey and Walter Jones lies entirely in their whiskers. Mr. Lang is not a tramp of urban fancies, and has a portfolio of jests of the kind that might be employed by Comical Brown in his endeavor to divert the agriculturists of New England. One of these jests is that of the Irishman known to the variety stage of the old Red Sandstone period, who said of a Hebrew sign, that he couldn't read it, but if he had his flute with him he could play it.

This was greeted by Mr. Proctor's audience with failing tears.

At Koster & Bial's Yvette Guilbert is in her last week, and in honor of her successful engagement she has consented to appear at a special matinee next Friday. Other features in this week's programme are the monologue of Lew Dockstader, the cake walking of Messrs. Williams and Walker and the midair feats of the Zedoras.

JAMES L. FORD.

LYCEUM'S NEW PLAY.

An Unwholesome Curtain Now Precedes "The Late Mr. Castello."

Mr. Daniel Frohman, manager of the Lyceum Theatre, informs his patrons through the medium of a very neatly printed programme, that,

The present is the tenth year of the stock company, and the manager will adhere to the same policy that has guided him in the past—that of presenting wholesome entertainment for rational people.

Last evening Mr. Daniel Frohman presented two plays at the Lyceum, which, unlike the performances managed by the late Mr. Barnum, failed lamentably in fulfilling the managerial promises on the playbills. The first piece, "The White Flower," by Minnie Maddern Fiske, is most unwholesome, not to use a well-deserved harsher phrase, and the second, "The Late Mr. Castello," which is now in its third week, is a foolish farce poorly presented. It certainly failed to entertain a majority of the 896 people that constituted the limited audience.

"The White Flower" is unwholesome because virtue is trampled under foot, and vice triumphs, as the curtain falls on the death of a husband who takes his own life because his wife loves his best friend. The only point made by the players is that the husband really did a very nice gentlemanly thing when he put himself out of the way, and gave madame the Countess and his handsome physician the opportunity to make up the time in love making that had been lost during his life. Mr. Felix Morris, who had the part of Count de Rohan, obviously plays to this end by an unnecessary repulsiveness savoring more of farce than drama and by adopting an appearance of senile dementia that seems to have been carefully copied from the work of that clever actor Mansfield as Baron Chevrial. It is not wholesome for the young and beautiful heroine to marry a very feeble old roue who sups on chloral hydrate, wears corsets and paints his eyebrows, and it needs a harder word to characterize her conduct when she makes up her mind to elope with her good looking physician, but fails to do so because the letter of assignation and badge of consent are intercepted by accident by her husband.

If Manager Daniel Frohman thinks this is the sort of thing that suits his regular patrons he should at least change the form of his announcements, that the unwary innocent may not be lured into witnessing something that decency does not approve. It might be better to change the title to "The Triumphant Lover and the Silly Husband" or "The Flirting Countess, the Gay Doctor and the Twelve Drops of Cold Poison." Miss Marie Shotwell as Countess de Rohan, tried hard to soften the immorality of the play by a great show of devotion to the Count, and much reluctance at leaving him; but the hypocrisy is too apparent, and defeats its intention.

Time does not improve "The Late Mr. Castello," nor the acting of Miss Mary Mannering. If she could distinguish between silliness and gayety, between English as it is spoken in good society and the dreadful patois of Liverpool, if she would learn how to walk and smile and shrink, one could forgive her failure to act and excuse her remarkably original series of gesticulations. It may be that such things as she does could be mistaken for blandishments in Mars, but on this planet the relict of "The Late Mr. Castello" would never succeed in arousing the jealousy of all the other women, as Mr. Sydney Grundy kindly arranged the heroine of his farce should.

Mr. Daniel Frohman, to be quite correct, really ought to change his sign by adding the letters UN to wholesome and altering rational to silly.

T. T. WILLIAMS.

OTHER GOOD THINGS.

Attractions at the Various Theatres That Have Been Seen Before.

J. K. Emmett made his vaudeville debut at Proctor's Twenty-third Street Theatre, last night, in an entertaining sketch entitled, "Fritz in Clover."

Nina Diva, a very clever French chanteuse, was the novelty on the bill at the Olympia Music Hall. Mlle. Diva sang several songs in a very effective manner, and wore some handsome costumes.

"Captain Impudence" entered upon the second week of its successful run at the American last night before an audience that tested the capacity of the theatre. Edwin M. Royle, Selina Fetter Royle, McKee Rankin, Amelia Bingham and the other members of the cast were rewarded with frequent curtain calls for their excellent work.

WAGNER NIGHT AT THE OPERA.

By Nym Crinkle.

"Siegfried" was again the focus of a popular demonstration at the Metropolitan Opera House last night. The same elements, minus Mme. Melba, that gave prestige to the first performance, were marshalled in good breath at the third lap of this gigantic tidal wave from the German ocean of sound. All the avoirdupoise experts were standing up in the parquette with their backs to the stage, weighing the inflowing brilliancy with their lorgnette scales half an hour before the start. It has become an important matter of record to determine the brilliancy of musical audiences—though just exactly what constitutes the brilliancy of an audience, aside from the element that Tiffany contributes, it is difficult to say. It is now generally conceded that a Wagner audience is more brilliant than a Meyerbeer or Donizetti audience—a fact which gave rise to the Max Maretzek mot, that it has to be, in order to make up for the dulness of the music. "There ought to be," said Max, "some brilliancy somewhere."

We can afford to smile at this echo of the ancien regime, when it is conceded that "Siegfried" has this season been the distinctive musical event at the Metropolitan, and has done more than any other event, not, indeed, to prove that Wagner is the messiah of new dispensation, not that his theories are all tenable and that music was born with him and died with him, as we are almost daily told by the Bayreuth dervishes, but that his combination of music and drama is one of the engrossing subjects of our time, that no intelligent lover of art can afford to ignore.

The mistake that the Bayreuth friends make is in trying to overcome a certain natural repugnance that exists in all undeveloped minds to Wagner, by writing volumes of metaphysical arguments. The better way would be to take the victims to a Wagner performance and let Wagner himself blow the prejudices out of them, and crush them into subjection.

Midway as "Siegfried" is in the Nibelungen ring, it is distinctive enough as a stupendous composite of three arts, which Wager's genius was alone capable of welding into something like panoramic unity. Nobody ever before so cleverly succeeded in making two senses keep step and at the same time so completely fool each other. When the observer is most wrought upon by mechanical spectacle, he thinks it is the music; when the music most successfully maltreats him, he thinks it is the drama; whenever the strains rise to anything like absolute music the victim believes it is the specific thought and rushes off for a route map of the guiding motifs.

All this has been wearisomely traversed, and still "Siegfried," as we had it last night, is pounded into the memory as a monstrous achievement, vehement and palpitating without being human; vociferously transcendental and as concrete as an object lesson; flaming with pictures, trembling with supernatural combats and dragon rancors; roaring with gales of sound; a prehistoric disturbance in which the elements themselves take part, and monsters without genera make the purely human aria ashamed of itself by bellowing through a tube in their viscera.

The assembled wealth and fashion and intelligence of the metroplis paid the tribute of close attention to Siegfried. Not even the dreary stretches like the scene of the forging, in the first act, discouraged them. They had laid in courage as a camel takes in water, and they were going over the desert for the sake of its mirage and oases. They saw this magnificent spectacle pass on a tempest of sounds, and if they were not too intellectual they drifted with it. That they had any comprehension of the primitive symbolism that is imbedded in it, or had any interest in the far-fetched Aryan mysticism, or had ploughed at the Sagas for inspiration, I do not believe. So far as it was a comprehensible fairy story, swept along by gales that neither Eolus nor Prospero could have evoked or handled, they were satisfied.

To my mind Mme. Melba contributed a charm to the first representation that has not been repeated. It is now generally held that she was unequal to the role, and therefore relinquished it. In the purely declamatory sense alone can this be true. Histrionically I believe that she was superior to Mme. Litvinne, and aside from the austere demands that are made on what are now called "Wagner singers," she had a grace of spirit and a sensibility too fluctuant and fine for the dynamics of the part. The exultation over the gain of Mme. Melba to the select Valkyries was premature. She insisted on singing Brunhilde with what Keats or somebody calls "full throated ease," and nothing is so disrespectful to a Wagner role. Mme. Litvinne, on the contrary, sticks strenuously to business in every note. I think Mme. Litvinne meets the demand of all those who have studied the recent books on "How to Listen to Music." The truth is the more you study literature the more you will like Mme. Litvinne's singing. One of the critics who has a telephone run to Wagner's present stopping place, has received a message from him to this effect: "Oh, that I might have had that Siegfried at Bayreuth"—meaning Jean de Reszke. I think this message is a fake. At all events it is not characteristic of Wagner. We are making a star of De Reszke, and the Wagner opera was built to destroy stars and make us sun worshippers. De Reszke is entirely too good and great. I have recently read that "De Reszke loves his Siegfried as a man loves his bride," and is so aggravatingly perfect that criticism gets a headache when it looks at him. Is not this a good deal in the style of the old star system, when we worshipped Piccolomini and drank wine out of Sontag's slipper and cut ourselves with knives over Mario? Does a man love his bride at the top of his voice?

De Reszke's Siegfried is beyond doubt the most superb personal spectacle the season has afforded us. It is sheer hypocrisy to attribute his magnetism to spiritual qualities. Last night in the last act he set all bodices swelling and all tender cheeks quivering, but it was not his intonation nor his inspiration nor his intellectual acumen—climbing rocks is not a matter of inspiration so much as of supiration. It was his magnificent ensemble. He filled the stage—not with poetry, but with action. He was an athlete, champion demigod—and there was a woman at the other end of it.

Hurrah! says everybody. This is mysticism, supernaturalism, intellectuality. But it wasn't. It was the same old thing—romanticism, with a splendid personality, a good deal of machinery and a tidal wave of harmony—with a bonfire in the middle. It was irresistible—when are these things not irresistible? But what is to become of the Wagner opera if De Reszke goes on? Where will Wagner himself be in the hearts of his countrymen, and especially his countrywomen, if De Reszke is not restrained? Already there are public symptoms of degeneration, of a relapse to the loathsome Italian opera methods. Awhile ago we had (whenever a Wagner opera was given) a column about Wagner and a paragraph about the star. Now, ach, mein lieber Gott—we have columns about the tenor and a paragraph about Wagner. The writer who is in communication with Wagner ought to call his attention to this at once.

The enthusiasm of the audience last night was something disgracefully Italian. A stranger happening into the house might have thought himself in Palermo or Florence. He never would have thought he was in a city where Herr Seidl dwells and Mr. Damrosch stops.

Mind you, I like it, but it is contrary to the cult. It is taking our attention from those details upon which the great German master set so much value—the dragon's tail and Wotan's hat, for example. It disturbs the spiritual calm with which we should follow the leit motifs. If Herr Seidl had not looked round once or twice with that sad, reproachful smile of his, some of the ladies—shall I call them women?—in the boxes would have shouted "Brava!" And at the end of the third act some of the gentlemen—shall I ca them men?—embraced each other in the foyer with sobs. Did they think they had been listening to the "Il Trovatore" or that they were at a vaudeville dinner? Shame upon such conduct at a Wagner opera!